

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EURE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 INRE-00
USIE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07 L-03
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FM AMEMBASSY LONDON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8779
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE
AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY DUBLIN
AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN
AMCONSUL EDINBURGH
AMCONSUL BELFAST

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USEEC ALSO FOR EMBASSY

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PGOV, PINT, UK
SUBJECT: LIBERAL ASSEMBLY DUTIFULLY ENDORSES LIB-LAB
PACT

REF: LONDON 15951

1. AS ANTICIPATED, LIBERAL ASSEMBLY SEPT 28 OVERWHELM-
INGLY SUPPORTED (BY SHOW OF HANDS) LAST JULY'S RENEWAL
OF LIB-LAB PACT BY PARLIAMENTARY LIBERAL PARTY WITH
LABOR GOVERNMENT. BUT ASSEMBLY'S ENDORSEMENT OF THIS
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FAIT ACCOMPLI WAS GRUDGINGLY GIVEN IN "YES, BUT" FASHION:
AMENDMENT TO ORIGINAL MOTION OF STRAIGHTFORWARD
ENDORSEMENT STATED SUPPORT OF "SUBSTANTIAL MAJORITY"
OF LABOR MPS FOR PR IN EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT DIRECT
ELECTIONS BILL WOULD BE SEEN AS A "CRUCIAL INDICATOR"
OF LABOR SUPPORT FOR PACT. THIS AMENDMENT (CARRIED BY
SHOW OF HANDS WITH STANDING COMMITTEE'S ENDORSEMENT)

REFLECTED WIDESPREAD CONCERN THAT LIBERAL PARLIAMENTARIANS HAD BEEN TOO SOFT IN THEIR NEGOTIATIONS WITH GOVERNMENT AND THAT THE LIBERAL PARTY NEEDED ENACTMENT INTO LAW OF POSITIVE LIBERAL POLICIES IF LIBERALS WERE TO REVERSE DISASTROUS POST-PACT DECLINE IN POPULARITY. PARTY LEADERSHIP CONSIDERED WORDING OF AMENDMENT GENERAL ENOUGH TO GIVE IT NECESSARY FLEXIBILITY TO USE IN DISCUSSIONS WITH GOVERNMENT WITHOUT FORCING RUPTURE OF PACT. INDEED, PRO-PACT LEADERS ACCEPTED THIS EVENTUAL AMENDMENT WITH SIGH OF RELIEF SINCE ITS ORIGINAL VERSION HAD STARKLY AND UNEQUIVOCABLY DEMANDED AS A CONDITION FOR CONTINUING THE PACT SOMETHING PRIME MINISTER WOULD BE UNLIKELY TO BE ABLE TO DELIVER: A PRO-PR MAJORITY OF 100 WITHIN PARLIAMENTARY LABOR PARTY.

2. ASSEMBLY REJECTED BY ALMOST TWO-THIRDS VOTE (716 - 385) ANOTHER AMENDMENT WHICH IN ESSENCE -- DESPITE SOME FANCY SEMANTIC DENIALS BY ITS PROPONENTS -- WOULD HAVE TURNED DOWN THE PACT AS NEGOTIATED AND CALLED ON PARLIAMENTARIANS TO RENEGOTIATE. THAT AMENDMENT ON WHICH BULK OF DEBATE FOCUSSED CAME CLOSE, HOWEVER, TO REPRESENTING SENSE OF MEETING.

3. SCENE FOR DEBATE WAS SET PREVIOUS DAY BY PARTY LEADER DAVID STEEL'S ARTICULATE EXPOSITION OF RATIONALE FOR PACT, CLAIM OF ACHIEVEMENTS TO DATE AND PRESENTATION LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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OF ASPIRATIONS FOR FUTURE. AT FRINGE MEETING THAT EVENING, MP CYRIL SMITH WAS CHIEF SPEAKER AGAINST CONTINUING PACT ON BASIS THAT LIBERALS WOULD BE COMMITTING ELECTORAL SUICIDE IF THEY WENT INTO NEXT ELECTION WITHOUT HAVING FIRMLY DISASSOCIATED THEMSELVES LONG IN ADVANCE FROM LABOR PARTY WHICH HE SAW AS JUST AS MUCH AN ENEMY AS THE TORIES. ONE UNDERLYING DIFFERENCE BETWEEN STEEL'S AND SMITH'S VIEWS IS THAT SMITH THINKS LIBERALS COULD HAVE GOTTEN SAME SO-CALLED "ACHIEVEMENTS" WITHOUT PACT SINCE THEY DERIVE FROM CURRENT PARLIAMENTARY ARITHMETIC ; STEEL CONSIDERS THE PACT AS PROVIDING FRAMEWORK FOR ADVANCING LIBERAL POLICIES AND TIME IS NEEDED TO SHOW RESULTS TO ELECTORATE AND ENHANCE SUPPORT FOR LIBERALS.

4. SEPTEMBER 28 DEBATE WAS REITERATION OF LITANY OF ARGUMENTS FOR AND AGAINST. IN THE END, THE DELEGATES VOTED DUTIFULLY AS POLITICAL REALISTS -- AND EXPRESSED CONFIDENCE IN THEIR RELATIVELY NEW LEADER WHOM THEY STILL LIKE AND RESPECT, BUT WHO IS DRAGGING A RELUCTANT PARTY ALONG ON A CREATIVELY DANGEROUS STRATEGIC PATH. NEXT CRITICAL JUNCTURE FOR THE LIBERALS WILL BE TO SEE

HOW MUCH LIBERAL POLICIES ARE REFLECTED IN QUEEN'S
SPEECH WHEN NEXT SESSION OF PARLIAMENT CONVENES NOV. 3.

BREWSTER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
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Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PARTY LINE, POLITICAL PARTIES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 28-Sep-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
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Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
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Format: TEL
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Handling Restrictions: n/a
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Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770913/aaaaakut.tel
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TAGS: PGOV, PINT, UK
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